

"BIG SISTERS" Who Watch Over a Big City

A Development of the "Big Brother" Movement in Which Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt and Other Prominent New York Women Are Interested

"THE Big Sister Organization" is "a movement to enlist your personal interest in behalf of unfortunate girls (particularly those coming before the children's court), and also small children brought before the court because of improper guardianship."

Concisely put, this is the platform of a movement begun some six months ago by Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, who for a number of years has been devoting a great deal of her attention to welfare work, including the erection of large blocks of flats, especially adapted to the needs of tuberculosis sufferers.

Associated with Mrs. Vanderbilt are some of the foremost women of New York.



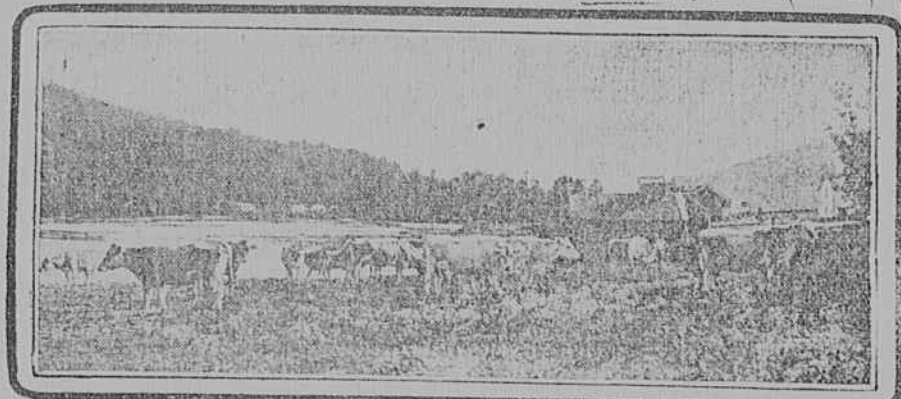
Scene at a Summer Camp of the "Big Brothers" who are winners of the "Big Sister" Movement

SUGGESTIONS TO BIG SISTERS

- Don't patronize. You may know more about virtue, but the girl is probably a better expert on temptation.
- Call on the girl in her home. You cannot enter into real sympathy with her until you know the life she lives, the air she breathes.
- Get acquainted with her father and mother. The battle is half won when you have gained the confidence of the parents. By coming to know the family you can often show them how to help the girl, and you can help them too.
- See what can be done to improve home conditions. The lack of real home life is generally the cause of the girl's trouble.
- If the girl is not in school or at work, the first thing to do is to get her back into school, if possible. A Big Sister can do wonders in securing a girl's ambition. If the family needs her help, get her a position in good surroundings.
- Find out where the girl spends her evenings. Most of them spend them in the street. It is your business to provide a better place—more attractive, not to you, but to the girl.
- Be interested in a girl's interests. Take her to a concert



Group of Boys Aided by the "Big Brothers"



A Summer Camp (in the Distance), at Andes, Delaware County, New York

And they have been giving not only money, but their own time and attention, to putting the title of their organization into actual practice. A most significant sign of the times it is, when the sex that but a few years ago was wont to shun the erring as if they had been lepers is now willing to go into the humblest of homes to reclaim the ones who are going astray.

Eminently successful is the work, too, because its practicability has been proved by a similar organization—the Big Brother Movement—which is now being conducted in more than half a hundred of the largest cities of the nation.

EVER since the Big Brother Movement was founded about seven years ago, it has been followed closely by Mrs. Vanderbilt, who has herself often attended the children's court, extending aid, in the quietest manner, to many an unfortunate.

More recently, she determined that the best manner of assisting her own sex would be to found an organization similar to that conducted by the men. This she did. Mrs. Willard D. Straight, Jr., was chosen treasurer, and an executive committee, composed of Mrs. Louis S. Morris, Mrs. William May Wright and Mrs. Willard D. Straight, was selected. All of these women, as well as many others who are giving their time and money to the work, are thoroughly well off in this world's goods. And that is why, very often, their efforts are effective. A wayward girl, who would be disposed to resent advice from ordinary sources, is naturally impressed when she is approached by a woman of such standing. Her ambition is aroused. She feels that if it is worth their while to remain in this world's goods, she is worth her while to remain in it. It is worth her while to be reclaimed. What is more, perhaps, she comes to realize that it is possible for her to lead an honest and respectable life, and that it is no small matter to one who may have been a prodigal in the biting criticisms of a gossiping neighborhood.

HOW THEY WORK

A better idea of the manner in which the work is conducted may be gained from the "Suggestions to Big Sisters" that are almost any other way. They tell what the women are to do, and how they are to do it. Yet there is another factor—the woman who finds the girls to be helped. Mrs. Willard D. Straight, Jr., a thoroughly experienced social investigator, who attends most of the sessions of the children's court, takes the representative of the Big Brother Movement, Roy P. Parsons, who is recognized by the judicial authorities, who, in many cases, are willing to turn children over to her on probation. Sometimes, when the officers are not serious, girls are placed in her charge without being arraigned.

"Some of our best work," Mrs. Straight explains, "is done in this way," and Mrs. Evans recent. "We have gained a great deal if we can keep a girl's name off the court records. Very often it saves her from being a marked person in her neighborhood, and any one can appreciate what that means."

"For the same reason, a great deal of our work has to be conducted as quietly as possible. Frequently, indeed, we assist families to move from one part of the city to another, so that a girl who has been the subject of comment in a neighborhood can get a fresh start."

"For those who cannot be assisted in their homes, we have a country house on Long Island. It is on the estate of William K. Vanderbilt, Jr., at Little Neck, and it enables quite a number of girls to live in quietness and seclusion, until they have time to get on their feet again, and begin a new life. As soon as possible we secure positions for them, and then the Big Sisters keep in touch with them to aid and encourage them in keeping away from their old associates."

"It is not unusual for the girls to become greatly attached to the Big Sisters, and we have many number of touching letters from those who have been enabled to become self-respecting and self-supporting."

"In the great majority of cases, we find, the girls are not naturally wicked; they have simply been the victims of wayward associates. Once they are brought to see where they are heading, and receive personal comfort and encouragement, the whole course of their lives is changed."

"We feel, indeed, that we can work most effectively with the girls under 15, who are brought to the children's court. While we have no age limit, most of our efforts are concentrated on them. Occasionally, other young women are referred to us, and we endeavor to do the best we can for them; but in the long run, the surest method of securing lasting reforms is to begin before the damage has been too great to be irreparable."

"To all this work, it is the personal element that counts most. With the girls as with the boys, sympathy is the most effective ally of self-help. What the Big Brother Movement has already accomplished has demonstrated this. Between April 1, 1911, and March 31, 1912, there were 847 men who looked after one or more boys. As a result, 211 youths were placed in good positions, 309 were sent to summer camps, and 41 needy ones were placed in homes in the country."

All told, 2,276 cases were handled, with a total of 20,727 investigations. This is the result of the movement started seven years ago by Earl Kent K. Coulter, then a clerk in the children's court, and later a member of the law firm of Coulter, Bond & McKimley.

From the start the movement attracted the support of some of the most influential men of New York.

and at present the officers are: President, Franklin C. Hoyt, of the children's court; Vice president, Luther H. Lewis and Robert L. Gerry; chairman of executive committee, Ernest L. Coulter, secretary, Charles A. Tausig; treasurer, Francis J. Danforth; directors, the Rev. Merle Smith, D. D., Louis de F. Downer, J. Van Beuren Mitchell, Nicholas Danforth, Walter T. Black, Charles L. Inslee, C. Robert Langenbacher, J. Beaumont Spencer, Charles E. Foxworth, Horace H. Shoemaker, William B. Osmond Field, Frank W. Pearsall, John H. Prall and Peter G. Gerry.

What stands out above all other things in connection with the movement is the record of efficiency as measured by the small number of relapses on the part of those who have been taken in charge by the Big Brothers. During the entire year ending October 1, 1911, there were but 56 out of the 2,155 boys who had been cared for who were returned to the children's court. This is a percentage of 98 on the reform side of the ledger.

\$3.84 SAVES A LAD

And this is accomplished at an average expenditure of \$3.84 for each boy aided. For this amount, per individual, three boys are maintained in the winter months, with more than fifty members each, several summer camps are conducted, to which are sent more than 200 youths, an office is maintained, which over 1200 boys call voluntarily, for guidance, in a twelvemonth a good inspection service is provided, and temporary financial assistance is granted when necessary.

Certainly there can be no lack of economy charged against the Big Brother management.

Yet of course, a large amount of the service is performed individually by those enrolled as Big Brothers. One man in particular, has had as many as ninety boys under his care at a time, with only the partial assistance of a friend. He earns his living, too, but he loves the work for boys above all other things, and is never so happy as when entertaining a crowd of youngsters.

In a great many cases, the employment problem is that which most demands attention. And, according to the court investigator, Mr. Parsons, it is often solved by the good common sense of the average business man.

"The boy himself is the main thing, from the way most of them reward the situation," said Mr. Parsons, recently. "They want bright, active, ambitious young fellows, and the lad himself is his best recommendation if he fills their requirements. The past is never as much a consideration as the present, and they seldom have cause to regret their judgments."

"What is better than recommendations, perhaps, is the fact that the boys are constantly being stimulated to do their best. Not only do they have the friendship of their Big Brothers, but they become interested in the clubs that are maintained for them. There is a club night once a week, gymnasium classes and the like."

"Again, for such boys as cannot be cared for elsewhere, we have a farm at Stockton, on the Delaware river, near Trenton, N. J. A complete change of environment, good housing and healthy food will work wonders with youngsters who would seem hopeless while under the influence of their city associations."

In fact, we got the farm as the result of the efforts of one of our Big Brothers to reform a lad whom we will call Bill. He was a wild one at first, but he lived in Hell's Kitchen, where it is right to steal, but it is not to be caught. When he came into court he was hardened to his fate. But a Big Brother was assigned to his case, and seemed to make some progress. He took care of Bill every Sunday from 3 A. M. to 1 P. M. Yet one day a week was plainly not enough, and Thursday evening was added to Bill's civilized life. It helped a lot. And as Bill was getting another square meal a week, he began to pick up."

"Still, it was apparent that if any lasting change was to be effected, Bill would have to be rescued from 'Hell's Kitchen.' The problem was solved when a friend of the general secretary gave us the farm, and other friends looked to the furnishings. One of them gave \$1000 for some horses, cows, pigs and chickens to put on it. Another added \$1000 to provide

or to a good, clean show. Try to encourage the habit of reading, give or loan her a book or magazine.

When you have learned to know the girl, have her join a church or settlement club, or place her in a Y. W. C. A. educational class. Find out whether she attends Sunday school or church, and take her with you to your own.

Invite her to your own home, and make her feel that she is welcome. It will perhaps be a new revelation of 'home' to her.

Get her to write to you once in a while, and always answer promptly.

If you are away from town during the summer, keep in touch with her and see that she gets a few weeks' vacation in the country.

Above all, remember that you are a BIG SISTER, and be patient, sympathetic and tactful.

Do it NOW. Now is the critical time when the girl needs help.

If you believe that a girl unaided cannot always overcome the tendency of unfortunate environments, or be happy and good without the things which make for happiness and goodness, you concur in the Big Sister platform.

Just one thing more. Please report occasionally the condition and progress of the girl or family under your guidance.

For a well, a topographical survey that may be the forerunner of a manual training school, and the like."

It was on April 24, 1911, that the first boy went to the farm, in the person of Bill. A capable superintendent, in the person of Edward MacDonald, a graduate at Good Will Farm, Hinkley, Me., was secured, but even with his salary and that of a farmer, the cost of maintaining twenty boys at the place for one year does not exceed \$5000. For \$175 one lad can be assured of a comfortable home for a twelvemonth.

For the city boys the several summer camps afford ideal outings, and the more they do may be inferred from the fact that the lads gain from three to sixteen pounds during their outings of from two to eight weeks. The principal camps are at Groton, Mass., and in Delaware county, New York.

Gold Isn't Good Enough Now

ABOUT fifty years hence, when politics shall have taken on aspects none of us living today dare forecast, there may be a convention in Chicago, Ill., or Wichita, Kan., or Buffalo, N. Y., or some other vast metropolis of that new era, at which a great, despairing leader will arise and cry out:

"Shall this powerful nation, with its 300,000,000 of people, quail before its ancient destiny and how democracy's proud head to the effete lands of Europe by abandoning its traditional loyalty to the gold standard in favor of this rare and unprocurable medium of exchange, platinum? Is our immense reserve of gold, the worshiped wealth of the ages, nothing more than pitiful dross? Shall we run our gold mining industry in order that the most treasured, most durable, most beautiful of metals shall be arbitrarily reduced to the shameful office of making pans to wash the supper dishes in?"

Which, allowing for oratorical hyperbole, is precisely what we may possibly do, some time or other, if gold keeps on becoming very much more common, and platinum should become somewhat less rare than it is now.

Already the goldsmith's art has, to an appreciable extent, been transferred to a platinum basis—and for only one reason in the world besides the circumstance that the new metal happens to be so rare that gold is dross by comparison. As for intrinsic merits, gold never had any notable superiority over metals infinitely more obtainable; but the only time iron money was minted was when old Lycurgus, in Sparta, used it with the deliberate purpose of destroying the value of all money as a medium of exchange.

NOWADAYS, when the society reporter spills superlatives over the wedding gifts of some famous heiress, leading place is given the jewelry with platinum settings. Jewelers will say that an appreciable utility inheres in the use of



would have cost nearly as much."

A dozen years ago—and these are official figures—no more than 100 ounces tray of platinum were mined in the United States, and nearly all the rest of the world's supply came from the Ural mountains, in Russia, as it does still. It was worth the paltry sum of \$2500—little more than \$8 an ounce, and that at a time when its importance in electricity for the manufacture of incandescent bulbs was fully appreciated.

But note how craftily everything that can possibly become money is studied throughout the world. Russia, potentially rich in its practical monopoly of the rare metal, had already begun to mint its platinum in a special form of coinage, which called for high values in small weight and compass. Weight for weight the value of these coins was midway between those in silver and gold, a very useful compromise for small pieces, like a terrible coin, which, worth \$255.5 in American money, would be a cumbersome cartwheel in silver, smaller than a feasible dime in gold. But the platinum, worth then about one-fourth its weight in gold, gave a coin between a quarter and a half dollar, with legal tender value slightly above \$250—almost ideal in its relation between bulk and purchasing power.

Any one today who happens to have five rubles in platinum, minted on the basis of ten or fifteen years ago, possesses an intrinsic cash asset of about \$25. The increase has been nearly 500 per cent. Gold now is worth \$20 to \$22 per ounce, but platinum is quoted at \$54 to \$57 per ounce, almost three times as much. Yet the world's output has multiplied in direct proportion to the enhancement of the value, a remarkable phenomenon, and in surprising defiance of the rule that increased quantities are attended by lessened values. Russia hasn't done it; no trust has operated the change; no machinations of greed have pushed platinum's price a single notch higher during its brief history of keeping values. It is on the sound, unfailing basis of supply and demand, and the demand steadily so far ahead of the increased supply that the clamoring world is willing to pay always higher rates to get its coveted slender ounces.

In the United States alone, as estimated by leading jewelers, we now use 5000 ounces for ornaments

formerly made exclusively of gold; and only conjecture can surmise how much greater is the utilization of the newly precious metal in the manufacture of incandescent lamps and crucibles for laboratory purposes, where it is employed extensively because of its immunity against acids.

Of course, no monetary expert would dream of seeing a platinum standard of coinage under existing conditions, notwithstanding abroad Russia's prompt employment of the output of its own mines for that very use. The drawback is platinum's relative scarcity. It takes now more than \$600,000,000 in gold for the specie circulation of the United States alone, and all the platinum mined in the world wouldn't let our millionaires have more than a small pocket-piece each to play with, if this country were to make it the standard medium of exchange. But the astounding rise in its intrinsic value, combined with the fact that it is indispensable in so important an industry as electric lighting, may bring about explorations for deposits, and improvements in methods of extraction, which, combined, could possibly furnish volume enough to meet the exigencies of the world's coinage.

IDEAL FOR DIAMONDS

Meanwhile, jewelry has been absolutely dominated by the pallid stranger, first, because it is now so valuable, and, next, because goldsmiths, who are artists, after all, have found in platinum their ideal framing for the diamond, king of gems. Two-thirds of all the more pretentious diamond settings now manufactured in the United States are in pure platinum, and gold, in that supremely important field, is now nearly as neglected as silver. The jeweler's reason is that the diamond calls for a neutral-color background to set forth its brilliancy to perfection. Years ago that one consideration led to the extensive use of silver in preference to gold for diamond settings. But it was found that silver would insist on tarnishing, and at length gold, undesirable as it was, became the main dependence of the craft.

If you will go to Europe and study the diamond jewelry put out there, you will find that it furnishes almost like the old silver, which antiquarians treasure as examples of the period when art discarded more value for the sake of securing a white background for the proud diamond. That is because the United States is the only country which demands its platinum at its best, free from the alloys which, in European hands, debase the platinum settings until they afford no guarantee of giving the perfect service their use demands of them.